The Builder.

VOLUME III.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 4, 1845.

ADDRESS.

WE issue to-day the hundredth Number of THE BUILDER, and commence with it a new year. Our progress up to this time has been in the highest degree satisfactory; friends have grown up around us on all sides; the goodness of our purpose has been universally recognized; and we consequently now find ourselves in a position to effect much more than we have yet attempted. Of this position we shall vigorously avail ourselves, and will spare no pains or outlay to render this journal *the* organ, *par excellence*, of the numerous and influential classes interested in architecture, building, engineering, archæology, practical science, and the decorative arts.

We are making such arrangements as will ensure for our readers the earliest and most authentic information on all subjects whereof THE BUILDER treats, both foreign and domestic, with sound and impartial opinions on the various matters which may come before them. New buildings, new materials, new processes, and new books, will be described and illustrated. As regards the latter, it is a constant complaint amongst provincial architects and builders, that having nothing to guide them in their purchases, they are led to order from London works which are of no use to them, and more often to refrain from buying those which, if they had a general notion of their contents and worth, they would gladly possess. We shall endeavour to supply this deficiency: and being untrammelled by any connection with publishers, shall do so fearlessly and honestly; with a disposition at all times to hold out a friendly hand to rising merit, and to give praise rather than censure, but with a resolute determination to shew no mercy to the shallow empiric or the egotistical pretender.

The properties of materials, and all new modes of construction, we shall be anxious to investigate; and we invite the earliest intelligence on these points, so that we may place the result of inquiry before our readers.

The new Metropolitan Buildings Act, which came into operation on the 1st instant, will necessarily be liable for a time to various readings, and will offer some disputed points. Our pages will be open for the discussion of them, and consideration will be given to such questions as may arise. The health of towns, to which this Act materially refers, has always received from us the attention that the importance of the subject demands: it will continue to form a prominent feature in our journal, and we shall aid resolutely every endeavour that may be made with that end in view. Against faulty modes of construction, unfortunately numerous and general, we shall continue to wage war,—one great object of THE BUILDER being the introduction of sound principles in building, and the dissemination of practical knowledge. The improvement of dwelling-places is an object of national importance.

Close pursuit of the useful will not, however, prevent attention to the beautiful, indeed the connection is too intimate to admit legitimately of separation.

"Taste never idly working, saves expense."

It must be constantly remarked that architecture as a fine art is much less understood by the public than as a useful art, whence it follows that our advance in matters of taste is much slower than in matters of utility. It will be our aim from time to time to diffuse a knowledge of the principles of architectural criticism and to cultivate the taste of our readers so far as it may be in our power to do so. The preservation of ancient remains, the proper conduct of societies devoted to architecture and archæology, and the due administration of *competitions*, will be specially regarded by us, and strenuously advocated. On all these points public opinion is now very different from what it was even ten years ago, and we believe we shall materially aid in obtaining a satisfactory result by concentrating information relating to them, and exposing unflinchingly, every instance of tergiversation which may become known.

We have a wide field, and strong determination: with that co-operation on the part of those interested in these matters that we have a right to expect, and which the present editor, commencing a new task, earnestly solicits, we cannot fail to effect much good.

WE ASK THIS CO-OPERATION, KIND READER, FROM YOU YOURSELF.

MODEL(?) HOUSES FOR THE LABOURING CLASSES.

IN THE BUILDER for December 21st, we drew attention to a statement and engraved plan of fifteen houses for the labouring classes, recently issued by the society for improving the condition of that part of the population. From this we learn that:—

"The committee, feeling that no description or reasoning, however accurate, is likely to make such an impression on the public as an actual experiment, had resolved to build a certain number of houses as models of the different kinds of dwellings which they would recommend for the labouring classes in populous towns; and for that purpose had taken, on reasonable terms, an eligible plot of land between Gray's-inn-road and the Lower-road, Pentonville, on the estate of Lord Calthorpe, and had commenced, under contract, the erection of the buildings shewn on the plan.

"In the arrangement of these buildings, the object had been to combine every point essential to the health, comfort, and moral habits of the industrious classes and their families, reference being had to the recommendations of the Health of Towns' Commission, particularly with respect to ventilation, drainage, and an ample supply of water."

Anxious to examine the society's first work, constructed with such an end in view, we hastened to the site of the new houses—the *model* houses near the Bagnigge Wells Tavern. We regret to say, unaffectedly and seriously, that our worst anticipations are confirmed. The arrangement is a disgrace to the society, and cannot surely have been seen by Lord Ashley, the chairman of the committee.

"In the Buildings Regulation Bill, brought in by that excellent nobleman in conjunction with Mr. Fox Maule and Mr. Tufnell, Feb. 1842, it is set forth most justly "that it shall not be lawful to build any new court or alley (except mews and stable-yards) narrower than 30 feet, through which there shall not be an open passage at each end thereof at least 20 feet wide, and entirely open from the ground upwards." And in the new Metropolitan Buildings Act, it is actually provided that no court or alley shall be built without "two entrances thereto, each being at the least the full width of the alley." Will it be believed then, by our readers, it certainly was not by ourselves when we first saw it even with our own eyes, that these houses now in course of erection, *model* houses remember, to which the society are to appeal when endeavouring to persuade some money-loving landlord to build in a manner more conducive to the health of the future occupiers than to the increase of his revenue, are actually arranged to form *a court open at one end only*, AND LESS THAN 23 FEET IN WIDTH AT THE WIDEST PART!! The plot of ground on which the fifteen buildings are crammed is so small, that, notwithstanding this proximity, the yard attached to each house is literally what its name imports in feet, or very little more.

We call most urgently on the committee and the shareholders to prevent the consummation of this most dangerous mistake, or they will rear a hot-bed for infection, and throw a great impediment in the way of that improvement which they profess to seek. The houses on one side are nearly roofed in; those on the other side have merely the footings laid; and we trust our contemporaries of the press will aid us with their powerful voices in our endeavour to prevent the completion of the plan as at present contemplated. If we were not assured that the income derived from these buildings would be devoted to the general objects of the society, we should say, that mammon had fought against facts, judgment, and common sense, and, to the discredit of all concerned, had gained the day. We hope there may yet be time to modify the evil.

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